

Parent Tips for Healthy Kids



Nutrition

- 1 Establish a general structure for meal and snack times, and allow eating only at these times.**
Most young children need three meals and two snacks per day, but by the age of eight, three meals and an afternoon snack are plenty. Offer water, fruits and vegetables if kids are still hungry in between meals and regular snack times. Save soda, punch, and flavored waters for special occasions.
- 2 Limit eating and snacking to a certain area of the home, such as the dining room or kitchen.**
Discourage grazing in front of the television or computer. If a child generally eats somewhere, say in front of the television, it can be a reminder to him to eat whenever he sits there, whether he really is hungry or not.
- 3 Give your kitchen a makeover.**
Move party foods like cookies, chips, soda and punch to higher cupboards or to the basement storage area. Make a designated snack drawer and fill it with things like lowfat granola bars, raisins, vanilla wafers, and dried fruit. Preportion into small plastic bags foods that don't come in individual packaging. Place a fruit bowl on the counter for easy access.
- 4 Find alternatives to rewarding or bribing with food.**
Instead, try stickers, hugs, and small toys, or simply say, "You did a great job!" Everyone wins when you offer some activity or time with your children as a reward. Dad can take the kids for a walk in the park. Mom can offer a swimming outing. The whole family can ride bikes together to the library.
- 5 Eat as a family as often as possible.**
Sit down and enjoy each other's company during meals. Kids learn when parents act as positive role models. They will also learn the social pleasures of eating well. Don't use this time for scolding. Focus on eating and conversation and turn off the T.V. while eating. Limit fast food to once a week or less.



Physical Activity

- 1 Set limits on sedentary time (television, video games, and computer).**
One-half hour to one hour per day of television time is plenty. Remove the television set from your child's bedroom. Don't worry if your child says he or she is bored. Boredom passes and often leads to creativity.
- 2 Plan kid-oriented activities that the whole family can enjoy.**
Hiking, swimming, riding bikes, and walking the dog are all activities that can be enjoyed by the whole family.
- 3 Ensure that your child reaches adulthood with an individual sport or activity that he or she enjoys, such as swimming, running, golf, or tennis.**
Enroll your child in intramural sports and recreational activities that fit your budget and time constraints. Then make them a priority!
- 4 Make activity part of everyday life.**
Children can walk or ride bicycles to school, climb stairs instead of using elevators and walk the dog every evening. If your neighborhood is unsafe, walk with your child to school and benefit from the exercise as well. Create a home environment that encourages physical activity. Have balls, jump ropes, and bikes easily accessible for children.



"Healthy bodies and happy people come in all shapes and all sizes. Adults and kids who eat right, exercise, and stay active are healthier, no matter how much they weigh or how they look."
Rachel Johnson, Registered Dietitian



Utah Department of Health
Cardiovascular Health Program